下一个网红是AI？

你会迷上虚拟偶像吗？社交网络正在酝酿"虚拟网红"风暴。既然背后都是人为操纵，虚拟偶像凭什么存在？为何引人疯狂？

卞和／报道

秀图、秀脸、秀衣装……在社交网络的秀场里诞生的网红，用一个等式来形容可以这么写：个性＋符号＋消费。

利用网红带动流量的商业模式，已逐渐让人们耳濡目染，养成了把生活中的一切展示在网上的习惯。

社交网络似乎逃脱不了一种扁平特征。在如此海量、快速的网络节奏下，内涵很容易被冲刷掉。也因此当电脑生成的"虚拟网红"（Virtual Influencer）开始出现时，有些人反而认为，他们可以按照不同的需求被完美地订制、生产、再造，因此更符合网络世界。

2016年的4月，一名脸带雀斑的19岁网红蜜葵拉（Lil Miquela）在IG上姗姗来迟。但在短短四年里后发先至，不仅为众多名牌代言，还登上"Wonderland""Vogue"杂志，推出单曲、个人时装系列，成为了坐拥超过200万粉丝的弄潮儿。没错，蜜葵拉是电脑生成的虚拟人物。

紧接其后的还有2017年诞生的虚拟超模Shudu Gram，2018年诞生的日本虚拟网红imma.gram等等。她们以极近逼真的拟真度登场，乍看之下很难辨别是否真人。

虽说是虚拟网红，他们的形

新加坡拉萨尔艺术学院的胡赛尼（Reyme Husaini，右）设计了虚拟网红Ava Lee Gram。（受访者提供）

体、妆容等等形象是通过电脑生成的，他们的言行实际上是由设计者来构思。

本地虚拟网红 传达Z世代想法

今年4月，本地也出现了虚拟网红"Ava Lee Gram"，设计者是就读新加坡拉萨尔艺术学院的胡赛尼（Reyme Husaini，27岁）。

在Ava诞生之前，摆在胡赛尼眼前的只有他的三维设计图和一堆问卷，从外貌、性别到思

想、观点，这一切都需要胡赛尼做巨细靡遗的调查、筛选和抉择。

问题是，Ava为什么而存在？胡赛尼解释说，Ava的观众群是一批与他自己年龄相仿的Z世代青少年，而她有自己的一把声音，也须要把她的信念和想法说出来。"那些真人网红的形象其实也在用数码技术精心雕琢，所以我觉得Ava不应该被差别对待。"

在冠病疫情期间出道，Ava在IG上露面的机会不多，但也就

诞生于2016年的虚拟YouTuber绊爱，如今拥有275万粉丝。（互联网）

社会现状声援了因疫情而取消的粉红点集会（Pink Dot），提醒大家保持社交距离等等。

目前Ava只有百余名粉丝，但与人类不同，她被"冻龄"在22岁。换句话说，只要继续运营下去，Ava和其他虚拟网红一样，可以等待各种机遇而不需要付出时间成本。

人工智能塑造网红？

像胡赛尼一样，投入制作虚拟网红风潮的设计者越来越多。数据研究公司"本地用户"（User Local Inc）在2018年的报告称，在YouTube上的虚拟博主两个月内增加了将近一倍，数量有超过4000个，其中最著名的莫过于拥有275万粉丝的"绊爱"（Kizuna AI）。

但这只是网红虚拟化的初步阶段，可以预见的是由人工智能自主控制和生产内容的虚拟网红迟早会被研发出来。

创投公司Betaworks正在把关注点放在"合成媒体"（synthetic media），这是利用电脑合成的画面以及人工智能

来生产媒体内容的领域。该公司的创业训练营负责人拉斯苏克（Danika Laszuk）认为，未来的网红根本无需真人操作，一切可以由电脑生产，然后在机械学习下一边与网民互动、交流，一边优化、进步。

微软早在2016年制作过一个聊天机器人Tay，不过它在与网民聊天后却发展出了种族和性别歧视的言论。让人工智能和人类展开文明地聊天，这或许是接下来研发团队会面临的挑战。

如果未来的网红都被人工智能所垄断，这样一想不免有些乏味。最早提出"虚拟现实"概念的美国计算机科学家杰伦·拉尼尔（Jaron Lanier）曾在他的著作《你不是个玩意儿》（You Are Not a Gadget）警示，如果世界上的一切都能被数字化，在互联网上被共享，那么在那之后，我们还能有"创意"可言吗？

Will the next top influencer be an AI?

Showcasing stunning photos, good looks and stylish fashion – this is the digital influencer, born in the show-and-tell world of social media. The formula of his/her success can be described using this equation: personality + symbol + consumption.

The business model of using internet celebrities to drive traffic has gradually habituated people to exhibiting all aspects of their lives on the internet, and even accepting the content produced by computer-generated virtual influencers. These entities may have appearances, speech patterns and behaviours like any normal person but they are, in fact, conceptualised, customised and produced by designers.

In April 2016, a freckled-faced nineteen-year-old by the name of Lil Miquela appeared on the Instagram scene. She is a virtual influencer, a computer-generated personality, but within four short years she rose to become a digital celebrity, amassing more than two million fans. She has endorsed many famous brands, was featured in popular publications *Wonderland* and *Vogue*, released a single, and even established her own fashion line.

Shortly after, virtual supermodel Shudu Gram appeared in 2017, with Japanese virtual influencer imma.gram following soon after in 2018. They burst onto the scene with an uncanny level of realism and at a glance, people had a hard time figuring out whether they were actual persons or not.

Local social media influencer conveys the thoughts of Gen Z

Singapore witnessed the appearance of its very own virtual influencer, Ava Lee Gram, in April this year. Her creator is twenty-seven-year-old Reyme Husaini, a BA(Hons) Fashion Media and Industries graduand at LASALLE College of the Arts.

Before the birth of Ava, all Husaini had to work with were 3D design drawings and a stack of questionnaires. Every aspect of Ava, including her appearance, thinking and attitude had to be carefully researched and decided upon by Husaini.

Some might wonder as to the purpose of Ava's existence. According to Husaini, Ava's audience are Gen Z youths who are, like him, opinionated. "Human influencers also have their appearances artistically modified using digital technology so Ava isn't any different and should be treated the same."

Launched during the period when COVID-19 gripped the world, Ava did not have much opportunity to appear on Instagram. However, she has lent her support to various causes such as the *PinkDot* movement, which had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

Currently, Ava only has a few hundred fans. However, unlike her human counterparts, her age is frozen at twenty-two years old, enabling her the luxury to wait for the right opportunities to come by without needing to pay the price of time.

AI-created influencers?

The number of virtual influencer creators like Husaini are on the rise. According to a report published in 2018 by data research company User Local Inc, the number of virtual bloggers on YouTube has doubled within a span of two months to almost over 4,000. The most popular amongst them is Kizuna AI who has 2.75 million followers.

This only marks the beginning of the virtualisation of influencers. With the increasing development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, more of such AI-produced content is expected.

Betaworks, a venture capital company, is currently focusing its efforts on synthetic media – a field involving social media content creation using computer-generated imagery (CGI) and AI. According to Danika Laszuk, director of its entrepreneurship training camp, the virtual influencer of the future will not require any human operation. He/She will be digitally produced and then, through machine learning and interactions with netizens, will grow progressively better.

As early as 2016, Microsoft had already launched a chatbot named Tay. However, in the course of chatting with users, it developed racist and sexually discriminatory views. Therefore, moving forward, one of the challenges posed to developers will be to enable civilised conversations between AI and human users.

Here comes the billion-dollar question though: if future influencers were all to be monopolised by AI, wouldn't it be rather boring? Jaron Lanier, an American computer scientist who first proposed the concept of virtual reality, warned in his book *You Are Not a Gadget* that if everything in the world were to be digitised, humanity may be left without any creativity.